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General Assembly

Fifty-sixth session

Official Records

33rd plenary meeting
Tuesday, 30 October 2001, 3 p.m.
New York

President: Mr. Han Seung-soo ..... (Republic of Korea)

The meeting was called to order at 3 p.m.

Agenda item 25

United Nations Year of Dialogue among Civilizations

Draft resolution (A/56/L.6)

The President: In order to expedite our work, I should now like to consult the Assembly with a view to considering immediately draft resolution A/56/L.6. In this connection, since document A/56/L.6 has been circulated only this morning, it would be necessary to waive the relevant of rule 78 of the rules of procedure, which reads as follows:

> "As a general rule, no proposal shall be discussed or put to the vote at any meeting of the General Assembly unless copies of it have been circulated to all delegations not later than the day preceding the meeting."

Unless I hear any objection, I shall take it that the Assembly agrees to consider draft resolution A/56/L.6.

It was so decided.

The President: The Assembly will now take a decision on draft resolution A/56/L.6.

May I take it that the Assembly decides to adopt draft resolution A/56/L.6?

Draft resolution A/56/L.6 was adopted (resolution 56/3).

The President: As a result of the resolution just adopted, agenda item 48, "Causes of conflict and the promotion of durable peace and sustainable development in Africa", originally scheduled for Thursday, 8 November, will now be taken up on Monday and Tuesday, 3 and 4 December 2001.

The General Assembly has thus concluded this stage of its consideration of agenda item 25.

Before we proceed further, I should like to refer to the general debate in the General Assembly at its current session. As members will recall, at the 16th plenary meeting of the General Assembly, on 3 October 2001, I informed representatives that the General Assembly will devote seven days instead of 10 days to the general debate during the session — from Saturday, 10 November, through Friday, 16 November, including Sunday, 11 November. There will be two meetings a day, the morning meetings from 9 a.m. to 1 p.m. and the afternoon meetings from 3 to 7 p.m. Consequently, there will be 14 plenary meetings instead of 20, and we will therefore have fewer hours for statements in the general debate.

As I did at the 16th plenary meeting, I will again appeal to members to urge speakers in the general debate to limit their statements to 15 minutes so that all the speakers can be accommodated within those seven days. I would be grateful for members' kind cooperation.

I should also like to inform members that list of speakers number 5 for the general debate is now ready

This record contains the text of speeches delivered in English and of the interpretation of speeches delivered in the other languages. Corrections should be submitted to the original languages only. They should be incorporated in a copy of the record and sent under the signature of a member of the delegation concerned to the Chief of the Verbatim Reporting Service, room C-178. Corrections will be issued after the end of the session in a consolidated corrigendum.

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and will be faxed to delegations some time today. Copies of the list are also available in room 2925.

Agenda item 49

Question of equitable representation on and increase in the membership of the Security Council and related matters

Mr. Valdivieso (Colombia) (*spoke in Spanish*): The consideration in the plenary General Assembly of the reform of the Security Council for several years shown that this is one of the items of the greatest importance, but also of the greatest complexity, on our agenda. We know that under your leadership, Mr. President, it will be possible to have a frank and productive discussion that will lead us to a full consideration of the central elements. This debate that must be geared towards strengthening the Organization in order to provide it with a Security Council in which all Member States can feel duly represented.

We should like to begin our statement with a reaffirmation of the centrality of the question of the veto. This privilege, conferred on only five Members of the United Nations, has implications for the functioning of the Council and for the very possibilities of agreeing on reform. While we do not disregard the fact that there is a close relationship between the exercise of the veto or the threat of its exercise on the one hand, and the functioning of the Council on the other, it is on the aspect of reform that we should like to share some brief thoughts.

As Colombia sees it, the question of the veto is tied closely to the subject of the expansion of the membership of the Council. We believe it would be contradictory to criticize this privilege, as we have been doing, and at the same time agree that there are some States that might have sufficient credentials to be granted the power to veto decisions in an expanded Council. Clearly, the existence of the veto, and the lack of political will to limit it, makes it even more difficult for us to arrive at a broad agreement that makes it possible to expand the Council.

Nonetheless, there is general consensus that the expansion should be in the category of non-permanent members. For this reason, progress in that direction would enhance the legitimacy of the Council and its credibility within and outside the United Nations.

In addition to the essential issue to which we have just referred, there are some procedural questions on which we should like to make a few comments.

First, we favour intensifying the productive dialogue between the General Assembly and the Security Council on the item that is now before us. The exchange of views we had in June of this year in one of the sessions of the Open-ended Working Group served to highlight the fact that non-members of the Council have valid concerns about the Council's activities and working methods that should be duly considered by members of that body. This example should be followed during the meetings of the Working Group next year. We wish to affirm, as of now, our readiness to participate once again and to contribute to the success of that exchange.

Secondly, we wish to emphasize that the Open-ended Working Group continues to be the appropriate forum to discuss reform of the Security Council in all its aspects. Colombia believes that it would be inconceivable to create alternative forums in which only a few would participate, when we have an open, democratic, transparent and representative mechanism to consider substantive items — cluster I — and procedural issues — cluster II.

Some will say that the Working Group has failed because there has not been any significant progress in the reform of the Council. But the cause of this — if it is a fact — cannot be the format we are using in considering the subject of reform, but, rather, the pernicious combination of the lack of realism in the aspirations of some members and the lack of political will to achieve reform on the part of others.

As elected members of the Council, we wish to express, thirdly, our commitment to do everything in our power to implement some of the suggestions that have been made in the Working Group on procedural issues.

Just recently, we have contributed to bringing about the convening of the working group on documentation and procedures despite some disagreement and reluctance on the part of some members of the Council and of prominent Secretariat officials. We commend the courage and decisiveness shown by Ambassador Richard Ryan of Ireland, President of the Council during the month of October, in his efforts to bring about that meeting. We will try to ensure that the opinions expressed by those who will be

participating in the debate on the report submitted by that body to the General Assembly will be appropriately taken into consideration.

I wish to conclude this statement by affirming our commitment to the achievement of comprehensive reform of the Security Council in all its aspects. The new structure of the international system and the current nature of the threats to international peace and security will give rise to tremendous responsibilities for each of our States. It is a new context that requires a more sound debate on the way of maximizing the legitimacy and the representativity of the Security Council.

Mr. Satoh (Japan): At the outset, I would like to express my gratitude to the former President of the General Assembly, Mr. Harri Holkeri, for the leadership he demonstrated on Security Council reform. I also thank him, Ambassador De Saram of Sri Lanka and Ambassador Ingólfsson of Iceland for their efforts in preparing the comprehensive report.

We are now experiencing changes of great magnitude in international politics. In the aftermath of the terrorist attacks against the United States on 11 September, nearly all States Members of the United Nations condemned these acts of terrorism and have been engaged in various forms of cooperation, recognizing that efforts to bring to justice those responsible for the attacks should be given highest priority on the international political agenda. This fact symbolizes a new trend in international cooperation.

Terrorist acts per se are not new phenomena. However, the events which took place on 11 September, by the viciousness of their means and the great number of their victims, have shown us, in an extremely cruel manner, that eliminating the threat of terrorism is the most urgent issue in international politics. Thus the countries of the world have come together to work towards their common goal of eliminating terrorism. The fact that 171 representatives condemned terrorism in their statements before the General Assembly clearly demonstrates the magnitude of the outrage of the international community at these terrorist acts.

Terrorist acts are different in character from both conflicts between States and internal confrontations, and the associated violence. It is said that one cannot remain neutral in the face of terrorism, but, on the other hand, defining terrorism is not an easy task. It is especially difficult to prevent terrorist acts, because terrorists are not easily distinguishable; in many cases, they are unidentifiable. However, the attacks of 11 September have shown us that terrorists can plot attacks against States which are similar in scale to a national military operation.

For this reason, the international community needs a new focus and new measures to deal with terrorism. Focusing on the financial resources of terrorists and promoting intelligence cooperation on terrorists are pertinent examples of this new approach. In addition, the possibility of terrorists' using nuclear, biological, or chemical weapons is becoming an increasingly realistic topic for discussion, and this justifies the importance of making anti-terrorism measures a priority item on the international political agenda.

What I have mentioned so far has significant implications for Security Council reform, which is the agenda item we are considering at today's meeting. First, as is evident in its resolution 1373 (2001), the Security Council must focus on an ever-wider range of areas. In order to decide on how to counter global terrorism effectively, the Security Council requires knowledge and expertise in a wide variety of fields, ranging from internal security to international financing.

Second, as is also implied in Security Council resolution 1373 (2001), in order to ensure the implementation of resolutions adopted by the Security Council, the cooperation of all Member States is required in a broad range of areas, including domestic measures such as consolidating laws and systems for monitoring and regulating cross-border movements of persons, goods, and even financial resources, as well as intelligence cooperation in various fields.

I recognize that at present the Security Council is doing its best to tackle these new challenges. However, this does not diminish the importance of realizing Security Council reform as early as possible. On the contrary, the need to strengthen international cooperation to fight terrorism underlines the importance of accelerating our efforts for Security Council reform by casting light on the issue of the legitimacy and effectiveness of the Council from new angles.

This is not the only reason why Security Council reform is necessary. Looking back at the activities of

the Council in the 1990s, we note that the scope of perspectives and the variety of human and material resources required for the maintenance of international peace and security have already expanded, and, indeed, will continue to expand. The peacekeeping operations of the United Nations, for example, are not only once again increasing in number, but their mandates are also expanding to cover broad areas ranging from the disarmament, demobilization and reintegration of ex-combatants, as seen in the case of Sierra Leone, to civil administration and development, as witnessed in Kosovo and East Timor. The Security Council has also come to be concerned with such issues as humanitarian assistance, particularly for refugees and internally displaced persons, and HIV/AIDS.

Moreover, as we look ahead to the future, when the Security Council considers the issue of realizing durable peace and stability in Afghanistan, which is closely related to the counter-terrorism measures we are engaged in now, it is clearly important to examine this issue in a way that envisages the political stability, economic and social reconstruction and development of Afghanistan, in addition to relief for refugees and internally displaced persons — an issue which has already become serious.

On the other hand, it goes without saying that, as seen on the Korean Peninsula and in the Middle East, the world is not yet free from military standoff's and vicious cycles of violence, which have persisted since the Cold War era. There are still no prospects for a solution to the Iraqi issue. And there are conflicts in Africa which are yet to be resolved.

Considering these expanding responsibilities of the Security Council, it is imperative that the legitimacy and effectiveness of the Council be enhanced through its reform. This is necessary because the present composition of the Security Council does not reflect the reality of today's international community.

The discussion on Security Council reform began in 1993 against the backdrop of the growing mood to search for a harmonious world order, prompted by the end of the cold war. However, the discussion has not yet shown any sign of progress, despite the fact that it has entered its eighth year. This situation is very disappointing to many countries, particularly since, in the course of the debate at the Millennium Summit and the General Assembly last year, it has become apparent that the great majority of Member States affirmed the necessity for Security Council reform.

I would therefore like to emphasize the importance for all of us to tackle the issue of Security Council reform with renewed enthusiasm and resolve, at this time when a trend of new international cooperation is growing in international politics.

On the closing day of the previous session of the General Assembly, the former President, Mr. Holkeri, offered three suggestions on how to move Security Council reform forward based on opinions he received from Foreign Ministers of Member States in response to his own initiative. They are to move the discussion to a higher political level; to approach comprehensive reform step by step; and to make the question of the veto part of these discussions. We believe that these suggestions merit thorough consideration.

In particular, we consider it advisable to focus our discussions on the question of the size of the expanded Council as the next step in a step-by-step approach towards the attainment of a final reform package. Furthermore, although this is a proposition to be taken up in the future, in the event concrete progress towards Security Council reform is not seen ten years after deliberation on this issue began, we believe it would be worthwhile to consider creating an opportunity for the political-level representatives of Member States to assess the work that has been done so far and to seek a way to move forward.

It is the mission of all Member States to give shape to the enthusiasm shown by Member States for Security Council reform at the Millennium Assembly and to move our discussion forward to that end. In recognition of this fact, the Government of Japan will continue its efforts to advance our discussion on reform, cooperating with many other Member States that share the same view. In that effort, I respectfully request the understanding and support of Member States.

Mr. Baali (Algeria) (*spoke in French*): Our debate on Security Council reform comes this year at a time marked by the growing discontent and sensation of frustration numerous delegations feel with regard to the Council. In a time when all institutions have striven to adapt to a new international reality, the Council still struggles to find its identity and genuinely embark on the road to reform and change. It is a time when those same delegations are ever more vehemently expressing

their wish for the General Assembly to recover its lost prerogatives and take its proper place at the heart of the Organization that gathers us here.

The discussions we have engaged in for the last eight years, which, over the years, have lost the fire that once nourished and the spirit that sustained them, have not led so far to any tangible result concerning the enlargement of the Council or to any appreciable improvement in its functioning. This state of affairs is essentially explained by the fact that — despite the upheavals and transformations in international relations in recent decades, due in part to the arrival on the world scene of dozens of new independent nations — this Organization and its principal organs continue to function according to the logic and constraints of a geopolitical order belonging to a past age.

The Security Council is at the centre of our system for collective security. It is the place where the positions, concerns and interests of the powerful nations are expressed and occasionally clash. Accordingly, the pressing need for Council reform poses a formidable challenge and a test of the declarations of intent made by our heads of State, at the time of the Millennium Summit, on strengthening the United Nations. The measures envisaged included thoroughgoing Security Council reform and the reassertion of the General Assembly's central role as the United Nations principal deliberative and representative organ.

We should recall that the importance and sensitivity of the question of Council reform was demonstrated once again by the great number of speakers who took the floor during last year's General Assembly debate; the vast majority of them agreed in recognizing, as does Algeria, that the Council, created immediately after the Second World War, no longer reflects the geopolitical realities of today's world and that its structure and methods of operation should therefore undergo a thorough transformation if it hopes to continue carrying out its international responsibilities with complete legitimacy and the required effectiveness.

Improving the functioning and working methods of the Council responds to a concern for its effectiveness and transparency. In this regard, my delegation welcomes the increasingly active role of the Security Council in the prevention and settlement of international crises and conflicts. We also note with satisfaction that the Council has introduced some positive measures to lend greater transparency to its work, particularly in opening briefings by the Secretariat to all Member States. We nevertheless believe that it is necessary for the Council to finally give definitive form to its rules of procedure and to institutionalize the arrangements regarding the various measures it has already taken to enhance transparency and its working methods so that the positive changes that have been made are not subject to the will of a given President or other member of the Council.

However, we note with regret that closed meetings — in which all the important issues are dealt with and where decisions affecting Member States are in fact taken — remain the normal practice, even though, to the contrary, those meetings should be the exception. We also note that those who hold the exorbitant power of the veto increasingly determine the final outcome of the Council's deliberations in advance among themselves. In addition, my delegation would like to express its regret regarding the fact that although the Council should, in conformity with Article 24 of the Charter, act according to the purposes and principles of the Charter, some members of the Council sometimes act as if they had in mind only defending and promoting their own national interests.

Moreover, my delegation would like to stress in particular the need for the Council to provide in the report it presents to the General Assembly by virtue of Article 24, paragraph 3, a timely, detailed, complete and analytical account of its work — and not simply a compilation, as was again the case this year. That should enable Member States to determine the extent to which the Council has been able to take into account the resolutions of the General Assembly in the decisions the Council takes on the issues that fall under the competency of both principal organs, as well as the suggestions and proposals made by Member States aimed at establishing more balanced, harmonious and fruitful relations between the two.

My delegation had hoped that, like the elected members, the permanent members of the Council would also take part in the animated and substantial debate that took place when the Council's report to the General Assembly was taken up. We would also be truly pleased to learn from both permanent and elected Council members that this year's debate did not leave them indifferent and that it will have an effect on the

functioning of the Council and on its future relations with the General Assembly.

My delegation also believes that it will be necessary for the Council to consult regularly and continuously with States directly and indirectly involved in conflicts discussed by the Council, as well as with regional and subregional organizations concerned. The Council should also take measures to give greater effect to Article 50 of the Charter, which deals with the right of every State to consult the Council if it finds itself in a difficult situation because of a preventive or coercive measure taken by the Council.

Along the same lines, greater efforts should also be made to involve troop-contributing countries in the development of the mandates for forces deployed by the United Nations. In this regard, we welcome the Council's adoption of a statement on cooperation with troop-contributing countries so as to develop a new spirit of partnership, cooperation and trust.

Finally, it would be advisable for the Council to devote itself to carrying out its mandate according to the Charter, and not to exercise any functions not explicitly conferred upon it by the Charter. It is not the Council's role to legislate; that is the role of States. Nor is it the Council's role to deal with economic and social matters; that is the role of the General Assembly and of the Economic and Social Council. The Council's primary responsibility is the maintenance of international peace and security. That is a sufficiently difficult, complex and demanding role, to which the Council should devote itself fully and without distraction.

What is nevertheless a cause of great concern and profound frustration for my delegation is the total lack of progress on matters of substance. Whether with regard to the size and composition of the Council, the criteria for choosing new permanent members or the question of the veto — to cite just a few examples — far from the achievement of desirable compromises, the gulfs separating the various positions have grown and become more pronounced, with each country holding on to its position and appearing unwilling to compromise or demonstrate flexibility.

This state of affairs can be attributed, in large measure, to the particularly sensitive and complex nature of the exercise and to the significant stakes associated with it. It is also due to our desire to undertake comprehensive and real reform of the Council. It should be underscored that this is also due to the lack of political will among a small number of delegations that — in addition to never having made an effort to put forth ideas that would move the reform process forward — have for some time tried to blame the blockage in the reform process on the working methods of the Open-ended Working Group, whose two Vice-Chairmen, the Ambassadors of Sri Lanka and Iceland, I would like to commend for their competence and dedication. The Working Group's methods are in fact no different at all from those of any other working group of the General Assembly.

With regard to the matter of the veto, my delegation believes that it is intrinsically linked to the enlargement of the Council, the consideration of which remains at the heart of the problem of reforming the Council. My delegation fully endorses the idea backed by almost every delegation, which holds that the veto is anachronistic, discriminatory and undemocratic. That being the case, my delegation would like to see progressive restrictions on this privilege, which should be limited only to issues under Chapter VII of the Charter, until its total elimination. While we wait for the exercise of this privilege from another age to be better regulated and then eliminated, we would hope that, in response to the urgent call made by the rest of the world, those who have the right of the veto would of their own volition demonstrate a pragmatic spirit and resort to, or threaten to resort to, the veto only in exceptional situations.

With regard to the matter of expanding the Council, my delegation believes that it is urgently necessary to correct the current imbalance by ensuring more balanced and equitable geopolitical representation and by increasing the participation of developing countries. In this connection, my delegation would like to reiterate its support for the specific proposals made by the members of the Non-Aligned Movement, in particular those proposals that have to do with increasing the number of Council members and that reflect the will to strengthen the effectiveness and representative character of that important organ.

Likewise, my delegation would like to underline that any increase in the membership of the Council should take into account the African position, formulated by the Organization of African Unity (OAU) summit in Harare in 1999, that the Council should be expanded by 11 seats, and that it would only

be fair — since the African continent is home to the largest number of Member States of the Organization and is the first priority of the Council — for Africa to have, out of those 11 seats, 2 permanent, rotating seats with the same prerogatives as other permanent members, and two non-permanent seats to be distributed among African States in accordance with current OAU criteria and elements that subsequently enhance those criteria. We believe that an enlargement of the Council to at least 26 members would give it more legitimacy, a more representative character and heightened credibility, without diminishing its effectiveness in any way.

The frustration we feel at the slow pace of the reform should not deter us from preserving with determination to find the way to a solution acceptable to everyone; nor should it lead us to take a partial and hasty decision that serves to compromise the chances for true Council reform.

However, this kind of exercise should not go on indefinitely, because the status quo in the Council is, in the final analysis, harmful to the Council's action and credibility, which it is in our fundamental interest to preserve, because the Council is for us all, large and small, the central pillar of our collective defence system. It is therefore the natural, sole recourse and framework for all action aimed at the maintenance of international peace and security.

I could not conclude without assuring you, Mr. President, of my delegation's full willingness to contribute positively and constructively to the debates on this important issue, which we hope will be pursued in a transparent calm atmosphere. For that, my delegation believes that the Working Group is the appropriate framework in which questions of Security Council reform should be raised and addressed, questions which remain the sole prerogative of Member States.

Mr. De Ruyt (Belgium): The events of 11 September and developments since then have squarely placed the United Nations at the centre of world attention. In order to face these new challenges and address the new demands of the international community, it looks more and more obvious that our Organization has to be adapted to the realities of today's world.

As the body with primary responsibility for peace and security, the Security Council stands to profit from a substantive enhancement of its representativity, transparency and efficiency. It is our firm belief that the events I have just referred to make our work on the reform of the Security Council all the more urgent.

Belgium coordinates the activities of the so-called G10, a group of 10 countries that is also composed of Australia, Austria, Bulgaria, the Czech Republic, Estonia, Hungary, Ireland, Portugal and Slovenia. Over the years we have put forward realistic and operational proposals to reform the Security Council. Those well-known proposals make it possible, in our view, to achieve a comprehensive reform package that is both reasonable and balanced.

However, the discussions at the previous session of the General Assembly again demonstrated how difficult it is to reach agreement on the delicate issue of Security Council reform. Progress on cluster I again proved elusive, in spite of some useful debates. Work on the working methods was more productive. We welcomed in particular the well attended discussions between the Open-ended Working Group and members of the Security Council. We look forward to similar meetings at the next session of the Open-ended Working Group. I would also like to take this opportunity to congratulate the Security Council on its new openness towards troop-contributing countries.

Your predecessor, Mr. President, indicated from the start of his mandate that he wanted to be actively involved in the work of Security Council reform. Together with the members of the Bureau, he steadfastly tried to make the work of the Open-ended Working Group more focused and productive. However, he could not but conclude that after eight years of work the main issues still remained open.

As Mr. Holkeri correctly stated in his closing address to the Assembly on 10 September, the main need now is to move forward from discussion to negotiation. This will necessarily entail showing flexibility and making compromises.

As the G10, we believe that further work can and should be done in the Open-ended Working Group. However, a breakthrough will not be possible without the clear political will of the members. This is why we should not exclude, as Mr. Holkeri himself suggested, moving to a political level at the appropriate time. We remain open as to the precise form this should take.

First, however, we should redouble our efforts to focus the work of the Open-ended Working Group, moving forward where progress is possible. At the same time, we should be careful not to lose sight of the final aim, which is a comprehensive agreement.

In the work on Security Council reform, Mr. President, we seek your active involvement. In this way, you can help us intensify our effort in order to achieve a comprehensive reform of the Security Council in all its aspects. My delegation and the other members of the G10 stand ready to assist you in your efforts.

Mr. De Rivero (Peru) (*spoke in Spanish*): A year ago more than 140 heads of State unanimously endorsed at the Millennium Summit the need to extensively reform the Security Council in all its aspects, an objective that has not been an isolated aspiration in our Organization's history.

The Security Council acts by delegation and on behalf of all Members. This presumes the exercise of shared responsibility and reflects the permanent interest of all States to transform the Council into a legitimate and transparent forum that responds effectively to the collective interest of the international community.

The first precedent for Council reform dates back to 1963, when, faced with a significant increase in the number of Members of the Organization, the General Assembly, by resolution 1991 (XVII) increased the number of members by five.

More than 30 years since that decision, and 8 years since the creation of the Working Group for the specific purpose of re-evaluating the situation and proposing concrete action to improve the Council's operation and membership, we see a discouraging picture: first, under-representation of the developing countries in its membership; secondly, an unclear decision-making process; thirdly, the exclusive configuration of a system of collective international security that excludes the majority of members of the Organization's democratic organ — the General Assembly — from the decision-making process; and, finally, the persistence of the anachronistic exercise of the right of veto.

In this regard, the quagmire of the discussions of the Open-ended Working Group continues to be the common denominator, and the need for a re-evaluation of the Organization's structure and functioning becomes more obvious than ever.

Peru does not wish to repeat once again its well-known position on the characteristics that this Security Council reform should have. However, we do wish to reiterate our view on the issue of the veto — and only the veto — precisely because we regard this element to be the cornerstone of the reform process at the present time.

At the 1945 San Francisco Conference, my country firmly upheld the inadmissibility of applying this privilege to determining the existence of a threat to or a breach of the peace, to fact-finding investigations in cases of conflict and to amendments to the Charter. The outcome is well known: the countries that opposed the veto had to choose between a Charter that contained this exception to the principle of sovereign equality of States as enshrined in Article 2 (1), or the failure of the San Francisco Conference. I believe the time has come to begin to correct this decision, one that reflected a specific time in history but one which is now in the past, because of the new shape of international relations today. We must, at least, limit the exercise of the veto. The limitation of the use of the veto to decisions under Chapter VII of the Charter, with a view to its total elimination, seems to be the consensus of all States except for the Permanent Members, and is in and of itself an important concession by the large majority of member countries, which seek to take the first step in this process and go beyond a mere unilateral commitment to self-restraint. And we have done this. If there is no agreement on limiting the veto, we should, for the time being, promote the expansion in the number of non-permanent members and the enhancement of the role of the General Assembly with an expanded Security Council, on the basis of clear and transparent criteria for action and linkage between these two bodies.

As regards transparency, Peru encourages and welcomes the efforts at openness made in recent years, which have led to a larger number of open Security Council meetings, and the effort made by some presidencies to ensure that the opinions of non-member States — in particular, of those States that are directly involved — be considered in the final result of Council meetings. This is fine. We are convinced that this type of measure represents a direct contribution to the work and the efficiency of the Security Council. Nonetheless, initiatives of this type remain to be

implemented, as do others aimed at greater discussion and dissemination of the concepts of collective security, as well as information on peace processes, in a secure and invariable regulatory framework.

In this connection, we wish to emphasize in particular the open debate on the strengthening of cooperation with troop-contributing countries, which led to the adoption of resolution 1353 (2001), which is already being implemented. This resolution recognized the importance of the participation of troop contributors for the success of peacekeeping operations. This is a coherent, practical measure, as well as a just recognition of those States that do participate in the riskiest stages of peacekeeping operations.

In this same context of transparency, we also welcomed the presence of Security Council ambassadors in the Working Group on the reform of the Council. This gave the Group the benefit of their experience and, mainly, it made it possible to gather together and convey to the entire Council the comments and suggestions that were made at that session. We, therefore, encourage the continuation of this exercise in the future.

Lastly, Peru reaffirms its firm will to continue to contribute actively and constructively to this important subject with the ultimate objective of shaping a United Nations which is more equitable, fairer and more transparent, for the benefit of all States.

Mr. Mahbubani (Singapore): Please allow me to begin by both thanking and congratulating former General Assembly President Harri Holkeri of Finland and Ambassadors John de Saram of Sri Lanka and Thorsteinn Ingólfsson of Iceland for the good work they have done. Under difficult circumstances, they have done a sterling job. In particular, their initiative to compile relevant excerpts from the work of the Security Council and of the General Assembly on cluster II issues helped to generate a more informed discussion. This is the good news.

Now comes the bad news. Most diplomats obey their leaders' instructions immediately. Collectively, however, we, the United Nations diplomats, have decided to ignore our leaders' instructions. Last year, at the Millennium Summit, our leaders instructed us "to intensify our efforts to achieve a comprehensive reform of the Security Council in all its aspects". This instruction is simple and clear. We should reform all aspects of the Security Council. However, the report submitted by the Open-ended Working Group suggests that we remain on autopilot, obeying United Nations General Assembly resolutions rather than the Millennium Summit declaration. Hence, the first point we wish to make in this debate is a simple one: let us aim for comprehensive, not selective, reform of the Council.

To reform an institution, or indeed an individual, we first have to understand the nature of the beast that we are reforming. Probably very few of us understand the real nature of the Security Council. Certainly, in the case of Singapore, after serving 10 months on the Council, we are not sure that we understand its core essence well. Indeed, it is hard to find the right metaphor for the Council. Perhaps it can be compared to a medieval castle with five traditional lords. Its job is to take care of peace and security in the global village. The villagers are allowed to elect 10 representatives to serve for two years on the castle's high council. Hence, it is a partially democratic council, but only the lords have decisive veto powers. All this is well known. We are revealing nothing new.

What is less well known is how the castle's high council arrives at key decisions. In recent years, the number of Council meetings has exploded. There are public meetings; closed meetings; private meetings, which are sometimes open and sometimes closed to media and non-members; informal consultations, which take up most of the time; Arria formula meetings; sanctions committee meetings, now coupled with the counter-terrorism Committee meetings. Then, of course, there are the private meetings among the lords that are not documented and the meetings of the groups of friends, which are equally opaque, with no trace of accountability attached to them.

Despite the enormous importance of these meetings, the Council has no agreed glossary of terms to describe the meetings. The Singapore mission has attempted to produce a glossary, which can be found on our Web site, but even our list is inadequate. Indeed we have steadfastly advocated that the informal working group on procedures and documentation of the Security Council should meet more often. Here, I am glad that the Permanent Representative of Colombia, Ambassador Alfonso Valdivieso, speaking earlier today, also reiterated the importance of that working group.

The rules of procedure, which remain provisional after 56 years, should be formalized. Speakers' lists — which are prepared in ways that most of us do not understand — should be prepared in an open, transparent and equitable fashion. Despite all our pleas, the informal working group has met only twice in 10 months. The unavoidable conclusion is that the Council prefers arbitrary behaviour to rule-based regimes.

How have the global villagers reacted to all this? They have called for more transparency. Indeed, that has been the buzzword for much of the discussion here and in the Open-ended Working Group on Security Council reform. We support the call for transparency. For Singapore, we are not sure that we fully understand how all the decisions are made, even though we attend all the meetings without fail. This castle, we have discovered, has, like most medieval castles, a secret labyrinth that we have not penetrated. Perhaps we never will. Hence we doubt that calls for more transparency will help very much. It would be like trying to add windows to a castle. Such windows will never shine light on the labyrinth.

The processes of decision-making within the Council are therefore likely to remain opaque, not transparent. However, there is some balancing good news. The output of these decision-making processes is public and clearly visible. In recent years, the public output of the Council has seen a phenomenal increase. In a recent article, former United States Ambassador Nancy Soderberg has documented that, during the cold war, only 18 peacekeeping missions and two sanctions regimes were approved. But since the end of the cold war 12 years ago, the Council has approved almost 40 peacekeeping missions and imposed 13 sanctions regimes. As a consequence, the United Nations budget for peacekeeping operations has exploded from $600 million in 1989 to $3 billion in 2001. So, if we want to truly reform the Council comprehensively, a more productive approach would be to focus our attention on this massive increase in output, which is clearly visible.

We can devise many ingenious ways of assessing this output. For example, the Council's key responsibility, assigned by the United Nations Charter, is to deal with threats to international peace and security. Using open sources — say from the International Institute of Strategic Studies of London or Jane's Defence Weekly — we can draw a map of all the trouble spots in the world. Over this map, we can superimpose another, drawn on a clear plastic sheet, of the areas that the United Nations is intervening in. The discrepancy between the two should indicate areas of divergence. It should be fairly easy then to pose direct, relevant questions to the Council that could then help to reform the Council.

This is why we are disappointed with the work of the Open-ended Working Group. Here, let me stress that we are criticizing the members of the Working Group and not the Vice-Chairmen. The Open-ended Working Group has not taken to heart the instruction of the leaders to reform the Council comprehensively. To avoid any misunderstanding here, let me also stress that Singapore does support a reform of the composition of the Council. We support the clearly articulated position of the Non-Aligned Movement. Certainly, the Council can be effective only if it accurately reflects the current global configuration of power and not that of 1945. The world has changed enormously since then — indeed, it has changed enormously even since 11 September.

The Council cannot remain frozen. But if we want to add new members — permanent, semi-permanent or temporary — do we not first have to understand what it is we want them to do in the castle before we select them? This point is especially important for the small States, of which Singapore is one. Through a statistical analysis of the membership of the Council since 1945, we have discovered that small States have served on the average once, twice and sometimes never on the Security Council since its creation. By contrast, larger States have served five to eight times. For small States, therefore, it should be in our obvious self-interest to link the privileges of permanent or semi-permanent membership to obligation. If there are no reciprocal obligations to small States, how does it serve their interest to support the current or additional vetoes?

Changing the composition of the Council is therefore only one dimension of Council reform. Equally importantly, we have to scrutinize and audit the working methods of the Council. Undoubtedly, some of the discussions on cluster II issues have had a beneficial effect in making the Council slightly more open, but, in order to comprehensively reform the Council, we may have to add a set of cluster III issues to assess the output.

The main difficulty we face here is that the global villagers have not agreed on a simple, clear and coherent conceptual framework to assess the output of the Council. A partial listing would include the peacekeeping operations, which, as we noted in our speech on the report of the Security Council to the General Assembly, in the past two years alone has grown from 9,000 military troops and 2,000 civilian police in 1999 to 35,000 military troops and 8,000 civilian police in 2001. It would also include the sanctions regimes, which have in turn subsidiary monitoring mechanisms and panels of experts. It would include the recently established counter-terrorism Committee, which has enormous and far-reaching powers. It would include the International Criminal Tribunals, which cost a few hundred million dollars a year, and, of course, the special Security Council missions to trouble spots.

The question is this: Whose responsibility is it to assess this massive output to ensure that the Council is doing a good job? A management expert recently told me that the first rule of management is this: if you cannot measure it, you cannot manage it. If it is not the Open-ended Working Group which is going to measure it, do we need to create a separate group to do this? Should the Council do its own review or should the General Assembly assign some other body — perhaps the Open-ended Working Group — to do so?

To be fair to the Council, let me also add that it is absolutely clear that it has done much good work in recent years. Certainly, the Council can proudly claim a share of the Nobel Peace Prize recently awarded to the United Nations. East Timor, for example, has the real potential of becoming a shining success story if the United Nations manages its exit well by agreeing to continued funding through assessed contributions — and incidentally the term assessed contributions is very important — over the next two years. Similarly, the people of Kosovo, where the peacekeeping operation costs $400 million a year, the people of Sierra Leone, where the peacekeeping operation costs $550 million and perhaps the people of the Democratic Republic of the Congo, where the peacekeeping operation costs $273 million, are all better off as a result of the massive United Nations presence in their countries. Like any human institution, the Council has also had its share of failures, as documented in the reports on Rwanda and Srebrenica, which — for reasons that have never been explained to us — have never been examined by the General Assembly.

What this regular mix of success and failure fails to reveal, however, is that there is a deep-seated, structural problem in the Council's responses to threats to international peace and security. As we know, the Council is often called upon to react to emergencies — as it is about to do, incidentally, in a massive way in Afghanistan in the near future. By reacting to emergencies, the work of the Council has often been compared to a fire department. Most fire departments are expected to respond to a fire no matter where it occurs. The deep-seated structural problem of the Council is that it does not react like the New York City Fire Department to emergencies. It is neither a principled nor a altruistic creature. Its decisions on where and how to react are conditioned more by the national interests of the members of the Council than by the needs of the global community that they serve.

Let me cite a simple, current, practical example to make this point. Tomorrow the Security Council will be discussing East Timor in open debate. Quite reasonably, a few of us in the Council, including Singapore, have asked the Council to endorse the recommendations of the Secretary-General in his report on East Timor. This would serve both the East Timorese people and the international community. Unfortunately — and this is a live example — some members of the Council prefer to put their national interests ahead of those of the international community. This raises an obvious question: should the Security Council serve the national interests of some of its members or those of the international community that the Council is dedicated to serve? Clearly any comprehensive reform of the Council will have to address such fundamental questions if we want to solve the deep-seated structural problem of the Council.

It is difficult in a brief speech like this to suggest how the Security Council could be comprehensively reformed. The Council is an enormously complex institution. It is becoming even more complex day by day, and we have seen — indeed in the first ten months of serving on the Council — the Council becoming more and more complex. Unfortunately, it is also an institution that has not been appropriately or comprehensively analyzed or understood by either academia or the media. Indeed, we have yet to find a good book or even a good series of articles that draw

out the real complexities of the Council. Frankly, neither has the General Assembly done so.

This is why we have compared the Security Council to a medieval castle. Its secret labyrinth has not been mapped or discovered. If we want to seriously implement our leaders' instructions to comprehensively reform the Council, we have to begin by developing a common understanding of how the Council really works. This will not be easy. We may have to keep the Open-ended Working Group going to understand the institution that we are trying to reform. And if we do not develop a good understanding of it, we will never be able to implement our leaders' instructions to comprehensively reform the Council. But in order to achieve such an understanding, we may have to change the language of our discourse in these annual debates. We should first develop a common agreed framework for understanding the essential nature of the Council that we are trying to reform. Without such an analytical framework, we will be peeling off the external layers without getting to the core of the Council.

In conclusion, it may be useful for us to reiterate some of the key points we wish to make here. Firstly — and I hope next year we will do so — we should abide by our leaders' instructions to comprehensively reform the Council. Secondly, in order to reform the Council we have to have an agreed understanding of what the Council is doing and what the Council is not doing. Thirdly, we cannot ignore political realities. The composition of the Council has to change with time. Fourthly, the General Assembly members have to decide what is more important for them in the Council: to have a more representative Council or to have a more effective and accountable Council? Without agreed answers to these questions, we may end up having this annual debate for another eight years with no significant progress. If we do not want that to happen, we should start afresh and take a different and more comprehensive approach.

Mr. Aboul Gheit (Egypt) (*spoke in Arabic*): For the ninth consecutive year, the General Assembly convenes to consider the question of equitable representation on and increase in the membership of the Security Council and other matters related to the Council. As usual, the delegation of Egypt is keenly interested in participating in the general discussion on this topic, because we believe that this matter is of great importance, given that it relates to one of the most important organs of the United Nations.

Although eight years have elapsed since the beginning of the intensive work of the Open-ended Working Group of the General Assembly on the matter, for many obvious reasons, the Group was not able to achieve much progress. We note the different ideas and initiatives concerning the future work of the Group and how to achieve some progress.

I would like here to make reference to the statement made by the delegation of Egypt during the last meeting of the Working Group, where we stressed the position of the non-aligned movement regarding comprehensive reforms and obstacles to them.

I would like to reaffirm Egypt's full commitment to the African position stated in the Harare Declaration of 1997, which emphasizes that Africa — which represents one third of the general membership — should be allotted seven seats in the expanded Council, two permanent seats, in accordance with system of rotation, and five non-permanent seats.

I would like to refer to some positive developments in the Council's working methods. Although limited, these developments deserve some encouragement and support. We call for more openness and more transparency in the working methods of the Council.

I lay particular stress on the following points. First, we are concerned at the fact that informal meetings and consultations among Council members are increasingly, and unfortunately, becoming the rule rather than the exception. I believe that the concept of informal consultations was introduced to provide the Council with some flexibility in its preliminary consultations; it was not intended to be — and should not be — a common practice and should not provide a forum for decision-making, with official meetings reserved simply for announcing those decisions. Formal meetings should not be limited to that function because the majority of Member States no longer understand the facts behind the Council's decision-making.

Secondly, the question of whether the veto power is a prerogative or a responsibility continues to block Council reform. There are still no checks on the exercise of that power, which continues to reflect narrow national positions. This runs counter to the intentions of the founders of the Organization.

Thirdly, we must continue a comprehensive approach to reform and must avoid taking small steps in various directions. We should aim for consensus on a package of reforms that will take account of the interests of the entire international community, as stated by the General Assembly on many occasions, notably in November 1998 with the adoption of resolution 53/30 on the required majority for the adoption of any resolution or decision on Security Council reform.

Fourthly, the Assembly's Open-ended Working Group on the Question of Equitable Representation on and Increase in the Membership of the Security Council and Other Matters related to the Security Council must continue its work under its existing mandate and working methods, irrespective of the topic under discussion, and particularly with respect to its internal decision-making mechanism. Much could be said about the Group's working methods, but it remains the only transparent open-ended forum for discussion of these important issues. Last June, we were glad to see the Security Council respond to the Assembly's invitation to send a delegation of permanent and non-permanent members to hold a dialogue with the Working Group on increasing the transparency of the Council's working methods. That was a good initiative, and we hope it will continue in future meetings.

In that connection, I want to make special reference to the work of the Council's Working Group on Documentation and Procedures. While we hail the establishment of the Group as the institutional memory of the Council, and while we praise its work, we want to make a number of comments. First, the activities of the Working Group continue to be restricted to the Council's official meetings and do not deal with informal consultations. As I said, informal consultations have become the rule in the work of the Council. Secondly, it remains unclear how the general membership will benefit from the Group's activities in terms of access to relevant documentation.

Let me make reference to another matter closely related to the Council's working methods: the growing trend to dispatch ever more Council fact-finding missions to certain regions. We agree that such missions are important and that they give the Council a clearer basis on which to make its decisions. But we think their mandates should be explicit and should be made public in advance, following due consultations with the country or countries concerned. We must respect State sovereignty, as enshrined in and guaranteed by the Charter.

Speaking of consultations with Member States, I must refer to the question of consultations between the Council and troop-contributing countries. These are now somewhat better than they were, but they are still not good enough. It is difficult to imagine that the Council can extend the mandate of peacekeeping operation without adequate prior consultation with all troop-contributing countries to determine their willingness to extend the service of their troops — not to mention consultation with the country directly concerned.

Nor can I fail to mention the annual reports of the Security Council to the General Assembly. A short while ago, the Assembly discussed the current report of the Council (A/56/2). Many delegations, including ours, thought we should be given a less narrative and more analytical report that explains background and context and that provides adequate information on the items on the Council's agenda. We would like to see such reports in future years.

My statement was intended to reaffirm a number of principles that guide Egypt's position on comprehensive and integrated reform of the Security Council. As the Assembly's Working Group enters its ninth year, we shall continue our active participation in its work. We are confident that, under your able leadership, Mr. President, the Group will achieve tangible results: equitable and comprehensive reform.

Mr. van den Berg (Netherlands): The central issue that needs to be addressed is the connection between the Security Council and the general membership of the United Nations. Improvement of the interaction between United Nations Members and the Security Council can be made now if the political will is there. We had better not wait for the outcome of the numbers game that we have been playing unsuccessfully for years. Security Council reform in the traditional sense — size, the veto and the position of the permanent members — is important but has proven to be a long-term exercise. In this statement, the focus will be on feasible results in the foreseeable future: my statement is on reform of working practices rather on reform of the Council itself. To achieve results now, solutions should be pragmatic and within existing Charter provisions. The objective should be to render the work of the Security Council more

transparent, accountable, inclusive and collaborative, and, as such, more effective.

Let us seize on the present momentum in the aftermath of the tragic events of 11 September to look into the possibility of forging better interaction between the Council and the general membership. Whether we talk about coalitions of the willing or regular United Nations peacekeeping operations, including post-conflict peace-building, we are dealing with Member States able and ready to make their financial, personnel and other resources available. In doing so, they assume at least as much responsibility as those Member States that through their privileged position in the Council are supposed to carry the biggest burden. Actually, in terms of committing troops, the major contributors are to be found outside the Council. This is also true of financial support for peace-building operations. This shows the imbalance that has come to exist between those that have responsibility and those that are more involved in implementation.

It is only fair to say that over time the Security Council has introduced important changes — very notably so in terms of transparency and the participation of non-members of the Council in its work. This progress we owe to a large extent to the Open-ended Working Group, which, while failing to reach agreement on the composition and size of the Council, has, over the years, been able to achieve considerable procedural improvements. We should not, therefore, underestimate the willingness for change of the Council itself. The Working Group and the Council have, in a sense, interacted effectively in this regard. The relationship between troop-contributing countries and the Council, for example, has been an obvious beneficiary of this development.

However, the question is: are we indeed satisfied with the present state of affairs? Is the Council up to responding effectively to complex, multifaceted security issues that require a multi-component response? The Netherlands is of the view that there is still scope to improve the effectiveness of the Security Council. Interestingly, the Charter gives us sufficient options to do this. The founding fathers of the United Nations laid down a structure that is still solid enough to serve the cause of peace effectively today and in the future, if only we are prepared to use its potential to the full.

At this point, we have to make a clear distinction between the interaction of the Security Council and the Member States, on the one hand, and the cooperation and coordination of the main intergovernmental bodies in the United Nations, on the other.

What can be done to support a meaningful interaction between the Security Council and the membership of the Organization? Over the past few years a number of suggestions have been made to this end. Some of these practical proposals have already been implemented, and others have met with a sympathetic ear and are still being studied. It would appear that the interaction between the Council and the membership could be further strengthened by combining an analysis of the decision-making process in the Council with suggestions and proposals, in order to find which ones, when implemented, would make a practical contribution to the interaction between the Council and Member States. Such an analysis would also show whether there are, on the map of interaction, blank spots providing scope for improved interaction.

The credibility of the Security Council and, for that matter, its effectiveness, are best served if its decisions are perceived as legitimate and representative. For that reason, the issue of representativeness has been at the heart of the debate on the composition and size of the Council. So far, representativeness has implied the need for regions to be better represented in the Council through membership of the Council by individual States of those regions. However, in this context, the discussion on the expansion of the Council seems deadlocked. Maybe we should develop a more pragmatic view of regional representation and, instead of looking at it in terms of membership of the Council only, should also focus on an issue-based approach. This would imply creating innovative mechanisms to ensure that regional players and all others contributing to a particular United Nations activity are involved in the processes leading up to decisions on peace operations in the region concerned.

A case in point is the issue of troop-contributing countries, which is at a critical juncture right now. Security Council resolution 1353 (2001) was certainly a step forward in keeping open the option for a more far-reaching mechanism for the involvement of troop-contributing countries in the work of the Council. I have already touched upon a possible role for non-members of the Security Council in the preparation of a

decision and its implementation. We expect that the present deliberations of the Security Council Working Group will lead to specific proposals to this end.

Effective involvement of non-members of the Security Council requires the membership to organize itself to facilitate the interaction with the Security Council. We have to make things manageable for the Security Council. Let us take up the example of the troop-contributing countries again. For a mission-specific mechanism to be effective in an operational sense, membership could in principle be limited to members of the Security Council and those whose contributions have a strong operational impact. However, considerations of representativeness could also be the basis for the composition of such a group. These mechanisms could provide a connection with so-called groups of friends, consisting of interested Council members, all troop-contributing countries and other interested States.

I would like to conclude by making a few remarks on the cooperation and coordination between the principal intergovernmental bodies of the United Nations — an issue which has to be clearly separated from the issue of interaction which I have just discussed. In the area of peace-building, the dividing line between peacekeeping and peace-building has been increasingly blurred so as to create one conceptually seamless operation. This fact, however, is not reflected in the way in which the principal intergovernmental bodies — the General Assembly, the Economic and Social Council and the Security Council — cooperate. Let us face it: the Security Council is venturing into the area of peace-building simply by default. There is no adequate intergovernmental structure to take over the baton to follow up on the peacekeeping activities of the Council.

In this context, one can hear critical remarks accusing the Security Council of encroaching upon the competence of the General Assembly and the Economic and Social Council. This, of course, creates an additional source of discontent in interaction with the Security Council. This is hardly fair, however, because it is up to us — the general membership — to improve and amend the present intergovernmental structure with a view to establishing a clear division of labour between the Security Council and the other intergovernmental bodies. Here again, it is, in fact, amazing how much room the Charter gives us in this respect.

The Netherlands recently organized a seminar, in cooperation with the International Peace Academy, on the issue of cooperation and coordination between the principal United Nations bodies. The seminar took place on 19 and 20 of this month in Tarrytown, and brought together permanent representatives on the Security Council and the Economic and Social Council and of countries not members of any of these organs. The conclusions reached at that seminar on the present state of intergovernmental coordination in the area of peace-building were candid, and the proposed solutions were practical and realistic.

My delegation will shortly present the summary and conclusions of this seminar to Member States through letters to you, Mr. President, and to the President of the Security Council and the President of the Economic and Social Council. It appears to me that the outcome of the seminar could serve as a thought-provoking contribution to the debate on the report of the Economic and Social Council, which we will have in this Assembly later this year.

Mr. Cunningham (United States of America): The United States is committed to the effort to strengthen the Security Council. Enlarging the Council is a means to that end, not the end in itself. A reformed Council, with Japan and Germany assuming permanent seats, and with an expanded number of rotating seats, would better enable the Council to exercise its primary responsibility for the maintenance of international peace and security under the Charter.

As we are all aware, the Open-ended Working Group is going into its eighth year of deliberations. This is indicative of the complexity of the issues that remain to be resolved: balancing representation between the developed and developing countries, achieving appropriate and equitable representation among regions and ensuring that Council enlargement is not purchased at the cost of lost effectiveness — by which we mean the ability to act promptly and decisively. The Open-ended Working Group, however, is the only venue in which the difficult issues outstanding can be resolved successfully. We want it to succeed in building as broad a consensus as possible. The time has come to move beyond the annual speech-making and debating of language nuance and instead to analyse seriously the various models for an expanded

Council, to find the one that will give us an enhanced, stronger, more effective Security Council.

Such a Security Council must have genuine and broad support. To get there, we cannot and should not attempt to divorce the issues of the expanded Council's ultimate size and its composition. Doing so will merely ensure more delay. And it will come as no surprise that we will continue to oppose efforts to limit or eliminate the veto, initiatives that serve only to stifle progress on the important task ahead of us. The veto remains an essential element of the Council's ability to maintain international peace and security.

As we discuss a future Council structure, we note that the current Council structure is certainly up to the challenge of advancing international peace and security. It is capable of prompt and effective action, and there is no better example of this than the Council's swift passage of Security Council resolution 1368 (2001), which articulated the United Nations unequivocal condemnation of terrorism within 26 hours of the 11 September attacks, and resolution 1373 (2001), a landmark decision that has forever changed the battle against terrorism.

The United States will work through the Open-ended Working Group, and in any discussions, to ensure that the Security Council continues to be the linchpin of international peace and security. We will also join others in making the Council more transparent and more representative of the entire membership. That is important work as well, and we are fully engaged. We hope that we can make real progress on all these issues in the coming session.

Mr. Sharma (India): We are once again gathered to debate the obvious. There is general agreement that the Security Council needs to be reformed and enlarged in order to make it more representative of the general membership, and to enable it to discharge its responsibilities under the Charter of the United Nations more effectively and with greater credibility and legitimacy. However, the devil lies in the detail. Deliberations over the last eight years in the General Assembly and in its Open-ended Working Group to consider all aspects of the question of an increase in the membership of the Council and to effectively address other matters related to the reform of the Council have failed to arrive at a comprehensive package acceptable to everyone.

We were encouraged by the broad support that this subject generated during the Millennium Summit, the general debate and subsequent consideration under the relevant agenda item during the fifty-fifth session of the General Assembly. Our heads of State and Government, in the Millennium Declaration, have directed us to intensify efforts to achieve a comprehensive reform of the Security Council. In the follow-up to the Millennium Summit, we must discharge the enormous responsibility placed upon us in this regard and address this vital issue with all the commitment and seriousness it deserves.

The tragic events of 11 September have dramatically coalesced world opinion in a common resolve to comprehensively combat the evil menace of terrorism in all its manifestations. The Security Council has, through resolution 1373 (2001), undertaken the ambitious and laudable task of rooting out this pernicious scourge root and branch. Its Committee on Counter-Terrorism has begun to address this issue in a serious and meaningful manner. We commend the Council for acting with alacrity. As a country that has been the victim for many years of this grave assault on the cherished ideals of freedom, democracy and pluralism, we wish the Council all success in this crucial responsibility towards the global community. We cannot afford to fail in this critical endeavour.

In countering threats to international peace and security, the importance of the role of the Security Council cannot be overemphasized. An unrepresentative and anachronistic Council that does not reflect current global realities would find it extremely difficult, notwithstanding its worthy intentions, to effectively and credibly tackle this momentous challenge to international peace and security. Moreover, it is clear that the focus of the Council's actions, as in the past, would be overwhelmingly developing countries, and the impact of the Council's actions would be almost entirely felt in the developing world. This only reinforces the imperative of enlarging the membership of the Council in both categories to make it more representative of the general membership and, in particular, the vast majority of developing countries. We would like to reiterate that a comprehensive package which includes expansion of the Council's membership, improvements in its working methods and reform of its decision-making process is the only way to proceed. This would

equip the Security Council to confront the grave challenges that confront the international community in the twenty-first century.

We have had the opportunity to outline India's position on Security Council restructuring on several occasions in the past. However, we would like to caution against the temptation to resort to piecemeal and partial solutions. After striving for over eight years, if we were to agree to an expansion of the Security Council in the non-permanent category alone, or if we were to make cosmetic changes in its working methods, we would be doing a disservice not only to ourselves but to the Organization as a whole. Instead of addressing the main issues, we would be shying away from them and thereby perpetuating an international system characterized by inequity.

We should avoid the seemingly simpler option of promoting agreement only on those issues on which a broad meeting of minds may emerge. Cluster I and cluster II issues are equally important and need to be considered together. The Non-Aligned Movement (NAM) has consistently held the view that expansion and reform of the Security Council should be integral parts of a common package. Any attempts to promote one at the expense of the other not only would contravene the NAM position but would also go against the mandate of the General Assembly to consider all aspects of this issue. A large number of delegations, including ours, have made suggestions pertaining to the working methods of the Council during the debate on the report of the Council held earlier this month. We would not like to repeat them here. It is our expectation that these suggestions will be considered and the required improvements effected.

While debating the issue of Security Council reform, one cannot but comment on the manner in which the Council mandates peacekeeping operations, a highly visible manifestation of the Organization's attempts to maintain international peace and security. It is most regrettable that one of the basic flaws in United Nations peacekeeping is the absence of a genuine partnership between the Security Council and the troop- contributing countries. This is further accentuated by the fact that very few Council members are major troop contributors. Complex and dangerous operations like those in the Democratic Republic of the Congo and Sierra Leone and the one being envisaged for Burundi cannot succeed in the absence of cooperation with the troop-contributing countries. The unfortunate incidents in Sierra Leone last year should have galvanized the Council to take appropriate measures.

While recognizing that Security Council resolutions 1327 (2000) and 1353 (2001) seek to address this problem, we believe that this is simply not enough. The Brahimi Panel made a specific recommendation in this regard in paragraph 61 of its report. A number of troop-contributing countries have amplified on this particular recommendation and submitted proposals to the Council. We are grateful to Singapore for having resurrected the need for strengthening cooperation with troop-contributing countries and brought it to the forefront of the Council's agenda.

We would like also to commend Ambassador Curtis Ward of Jamaica for his untiring efforts as Chairman of the Council's Working Group on Peacekeeping Operations in trying to get the Working Group to focus on the proposals made by troop-contributing countries. There should be no attempt to preserve the status quo on the specious plea that existing mechanisms suffice. Those charged with the responsibility for peace and security would hopefully both contribute troops for peacekeeping and ensure a culture of consultations with troop contributors that is just and which contributes meaningfully to the decision-making process, which has a direct impact on the lives of their troops serving the United Nations. This is an anomaly that must be seriously and meaningfully addressed lest the disenchantment of troop contributors leave the Council with little else but the holding of mostly pointless thematic debates.

We would like to reiterate our conviction that any increase in permanent membership should be guided by objective and not subjective, selective or arbitrary criteria, and that all new permanent members should be designated together by the General Assembly, which is the only forum which can elect them. In this regard, there should be no restrictions imposed on the role or authority of the General Assembly.

We would like to commend Mr. Harri Holkeri, the former President of the General Assembly, for his personal contribution in trying to focus discussions on Security Council reform in the Open-ended Working Group. His very pertinent remarks at the concluding session of the fifty-fifth session of the General Assembly on this issue could guide us in our

subsequent deliberations. His initiative in writing to Foreign Ministers of Member States on this important subject is particularly praiseworthy. It would be very useful if the replies received from Member States were brought out in a compendium before the Open-ended Working Group commences its work next year.

Prime Minister Atal Behari Vajpayee said at the Millennium Summit that:

> "As the world's largest democracy, with enormous potential and rapidly growing economic power, and being a major contributor to peacekeeping operations, India has a natural claim to a permanent seat in the United Nations Security Council".

India has consistently contributed to all aspects of the Organization's work. We believe that on any objective grounds India would be considered as qualified for permanent membership of an expanded Security Council, whenever the membership finds this decision before it.

It is imperative that discussions on Security Council reform continue in a sustained and meaningful manner. There is no reason for pessimism, even though agreement in vital areas continues to elude us, even after eight years of protracted negotiations. We look forward to continuing our discussions in the Open-ended Working Group next year.

Mr. Petrič (Slovenia): I would like to begin, Sir, by expressing Slovenia's appreciation for the work done by your predecessor, Mr. Harri Holkeri, and by Ambassadors Ingólfsson of Iceland and De Saram of Sri Lanka, the two Vice-Chairmen of the Open-ended Working Group on Security Council reform. The progress achieved in the Working Group, though modest, is to a large extent the result of their tireless efforts to advance the reform process. I would also like to thank Mr. Holkeri for having provided us with the comprehensive and detailed report of the Working Group. We are, of course, confident, Mr. President, that this work will continue in the same manner during the fifty-sixth session of the General Assembly under your thoughtful and energetic guidance. Let me also state that Slovenia fully aligns itself with the statement made by the Permanent Representative of Belgium on behalf of the G-10 Group.

Since the creation of our Organization and the establishment of the Security Council as one of its main bodies, the world has radically changed. Its political, economic and social structures are very different from the ones that existed when the United Nations was born. We are all aware of these changes, and I daresay that we all agree that there is an urgent need to adapt our Organization — and the Security Council in particular — to the realities of a globalized international community.

It is my Government's firm belief that the composition of the Security Council must reflect the new realities of international community. The new distribution of political and economic power and the simple but glorious fact that more than 100 new nations — Slovenia, my country, among them — have come into being in the last 50 years should also be reflected in the composition of the Security Council. The current composition of the Security Council simply does not correspond to the realities of the international community. It is no wonder, then, that problems related to the authority, legitimacy and effectiveness of the Council are constantly being raised.

Many specific proposals on the enlargement of the Security Council, in terms of both its permanent and non-permanent membership, have been submitted since 1993, when — with great expectations — we started the debate on Security Council reform. Past debates, including the general debate at the fifty-fifth session of the Assembly, have indicated that a large number of States — including Slovenia — support an enlargement in both categories of Security Council membership. This, in Slovenia's view, is the only possible way to achieve what we need most: a fully representative Security Council. Of course, we do not support "quick fix" solutions, and we believe that, before any enlargement takes place, a careful calculation must be made in order to ensure the adequate and equitable geographic representation of all regional groups, including the Eastern European Group, whose membership in the United Nations has more than doubled in recent years.

Nevertheless, after eight years of extensive, but also repetitive, deliberations, we should try to come to some conclusions. With respect to Security Council reform, we should, during the fifty-sixth session of the General Assembly, endeavour to see where we already agree, where we are close to a general consensus, and where any consensus is out of reach for the time being.

The reform of the Security Council is not an event, but a process. We understand that it will take time and that the problems involved are complex and sensitive and go back to the roots of our Organization.

Nevertheless, we believe that the time has come for us to focus on the positive achievements of our past debate. We should try to focus especially on those aspects of reform which are within reach of a general consensus. Progress has been made in the debate in the Working Group, and I believe that the progress achieved is a solid basis for moving forward. My delegation believes that we have reached a point where we should also seriously reconsider the methods of our future work, since to continue to repeat our views again and again will not bring us nearer our common objective of making the Security Council truly representative and effective.

Reform of the Security Council is, of course, not only enlargement. For the majority of Member States, the question of working methods, transparency of work and decision-making, including the use of the veto, are of the same importance.

We note with satisfaction several improvements in the working methods of the Council. They have been encouraged to a large extent by the discussions in the Working Group and are also a very positive reaction by the Council itself to the criticism expressed, which again proves the relevance of the continuing discussions in the Working Group and elsewhere.

The Security Council, as a general rule, does not meet mostly behind closed doors any more. The number of open meetings is growing, even though the practice of holding open debates may need more precision, since some of the discussions are starting to resemble the discussions in the General Assembly. Meetings with troop-contributing countries have recently also witnessed some positive changes that enable those that contribute their troops to participate in the work of the Security Council.

We also welcome the greater use of Security Council missions to troubled areas, and believe that such missions should be used especially as a tool of preventive diplomacy. We should like to encourage further innovations in the work of the Security Council which enhance the cooperation between the Council and the rest of the membership of the United Nations.

Transparency in the work of the Security Council and its President has also increased significantly, even though it varies due to differences in the approach of the various presidencies. We would encourage as much as possible a unified policy of transparency to the benefit of the entire membership.

One of the most important, and also most controversial, aspects of the work of the Security Council is, of course, not the right of veto, which we do not oppose as such, but the use of the veto. In past discussions, including the deliberations in the Working Group, various proposals have been made. We feel that as far as the right of veto is concerned, we are still far from any consensus. So the discussion and the genuine dialogue must continue. Slovenia's view is that all permanent Security Council members — the old and the new — should enjoy the same status in the decision-making process in the Council.

Nevertheless, we also believe that ways can be found, based on many existing and converging proposals, to limit the use of the veto so as to satisfy the larger membership of the Organization. My delegation has stated during the deliberations in the Working Group — and I repeat — that the permanent members of the Security Council should be invited to state on a case-by-case basis why the veto was used. This would, in our view, be one useful instrument to make the work of the Council more transparent and thus closer to the general membership.

The veto is a specific right entrusted to some Member States by the Charter to enable them to carry special responsibility for international peace and security. The right of veto is not a privilege, but recognition of their special responsibility. Permanent members of the Security Council bear this special responsibility not only in the interest of each permanent member, but also in the interest of the entire international community. So the decisions of the Security Council are supposed to be made on behalf of the entire membership of the United Nations and indeed the whole world community. It is then not too much to expect the permanent members to use this unique and far-reaching right, the right of veto, in a transparent way.

Mr. Kittikhoun (Lao People's Democratic Republic) (*spoke in French*): We regret that, after eight years of discussion, we have not yet reached consensus on the delicate question of Security Council reform. It

is a difficult and complex issue. Despite all the frustration that is understandably felt, we should continue to do everything possible to find a solution to this crucial issue. The enthusiasm created by last year's Millennium Summit should be sustained, and every step should be taken to make progress on this common undertaking.

Since its creation in 1993, the Open-ended Working Group on Security Council reform has examined a number of aspects of restructuring this central organ of the United Nations system. Many proposals have been made on enlarging the Council, on its working methods and on its decision-making process, with the goal of making the Council a transparent and democratic organ enjoying the confidence of Member States as a whole.

Our position on this question is well known and has often been reiterated here in the General Assembly, as well as in the Open-ended Working Group. Our Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Foreign Affairs, Mr. Somsavat Lengsavad, reiterated this position in his statement during the Millennium Summit held in September last year. We are in favour of increasing the number of permanent and non-permanent members.

With respect to new permanent members, we believe that, due to today's global realities, two members should come from industrialized countries and three from developing countries. In our opinion, this formula, though it does not yet have universal support, could be the basis for discussion in our work in coming years.

With respect to increasing the number of non-permanent members, we consider reasonable the idea that Asia, Africa, Latin America and the Caribbean, and Eastern Europe should each have a representative on a new, enlarged Security Council. This formula, like many others, merits more careful consideration.

In Council reform, we, like the other members of the Movement of Non-Aligned Countries, are in favour of transparency in the working methods of the Security Council. We believe that transparency — particularly in the Council's decision-making process — would enable all of us to understand the rationale for its decisions, which would help the Council to gain the trust of all Member States.

The veto is one of the major problems that we face. It is at the very heart of the question of Council reform and is clearly one of the more controversial points in our overall efforts to restructure this body. As we all know, the vast majority of Member States believe that the right to the veto is anachronistic, discriminatory and anti-democratic. We believe that it is time to recognize the need to consider progressively restricting the use of this privilege, first limiting it to issues under Chapter VII of the Charter and eventually abolishing it completely. Of course, this will not be easy, given the various positions on this matter, but we should have the courage to continue discussing this fundamental issue in order to find a solution acceptable to all.

Our world has changed. The United Nations, and the Security Council in particular, must adapt to the new situation. That is why, like other delegations, we attach great importance to reforming this major body entrusted with the maintenance of international peace and security. However, given the complexity of this question, we should be patient, continue to debate and try to benefit from the momentum created by the Millennium Summit. We believe that together we should be able to attain our ultimate goal of making the Council a transparent and democratic body with enhanced legitimacy and, especially, credibility.

Sir Jeremy Greenstock (United Kingdom): Let me start by thanking you, Mr President, for calling a debate on this agenda item. Allow me to pay tribute to the contribution to the reform debate made by your predecessor as President of the General Assembly, Mr. Harri Holkeri, and his two Working Group Vice-Chairmen, Ambassadors de Saram and Ingólfsson. We now look forward to working with you and your Vice-Chairmen during the coming year.

The United Kingdom remains committed to implementing the call of world leaders in the Millennium Declaration to achieve a comprehensive reform of the Security Council in all its aspects. As a permanent Council member, we realize that it remains essential that the Security Council be made more representative of the modern world, and thus better equipped to tackle the many familiar and new challenges on its agenda.

The United Kingdom regrets that there has been little progress this year towards Council enlargement, despite the efforts of President Holkeri. Yet we see clear evidence of the emergence of general consensus on certain issues — for example, that expansion must

include developing countries. It has also become clear that a majority wish to see expansion in both permanent and non-permanent categories of membership.

We welcome the efforts made by Mr. Holkeri and his Bureau in the preparation of conference room papers to focus the debate in the Open-ended Working Group. While, of course, the Working Group works on the basis that nothing is agreed until everything is agreed, the United Kingdom's approach during the fifty-fifth session of the General Assembly was to attempt to narrow the areas of disagreement. This continues to be our approach. We hope that this will allow the Working Group to focus on areas where agreement is possible and to move progressively to the more difficult questions, while maintaining the ultimate goal of achieving a comprehensive reform package.

We are pleased that further progress has been made over the last year on improving the Council's working practices. The United Kingdom and other Security Council presidencies have contributed to this process. A number of innovations have been taken forward. The balance between public meetings and informal consultations may still not be quite right, but we have sought to hold as many Council meetings in public as possible. We have also conducted personal briefings by the presidency of non-members after informal consultations. We have invited non-members to speak in the Council in most debates. We have also sought to improve consultations with non-members, particularly through briefings with troop-contributing countries. We attempted to hold a meeting with members of the Economic and Social Council during the presidency in April to discuss areas of work where intergovernmental coordination clearly needs to be enhanced, such as peace-building. As Chairman of the new counter-terrorism Committee, I have already held a number of briefings to inform the wider membership of the work under way in the Committee. In these ways, our strong support for coordination and transparency will continue.

The work of the Council has now become significantly more accessible to non-members, without any diminution in its ability to take effective action. I hope that the Council will continue this welcome trend towards openness, and that it will be prepared to try further innovations when necessary. In response, it would be good to see the wider membership using the greater opportunities to address the Council to debate points more spontaneously and interactively. The United Kingdom will continue to encourage an evolution in that respect.

The United Kingdom is committed to making real progress on Security Council reform during the fifty-sixth session of the General Assembly. We stand ready to assist you, Mr. President, and your Vice-Chairmen, with our full support.

Mr. Andjaba (Namibia): Two weeks ago the General Assembly discussed the report of the Security Council. A significant number of Member States took part in that debate, which, in the view of my delegation, set the stage for the item before us today. I say this because the imperfections and shortcomings in the report of the Security Council, which have been so well articulated, go to the heart of the longstanding item we are now considering. Today I shall not comment in detail on the issues surrounding the item under discussion because we have done so for more than six years in the ad hoc Open-ended Working Group of the General Assembly, as well as in many other forums. Rather, I will make brief remarks on the burning need to garner political courage and will to bring to an early and successful end the work of the Working Group on the reform of the Security Council so as to bring about an increase in both categories of membership of the Security Council, in line with the principle of equitable geographical representation and the sovereign equality of States, in order to enhance its credibility and effectiveness.

We live in a complex world in which the role of the United Nations is evolving and its organs are assuming greater proportions. Cognizant of the fact that it is essential that the United Nations be reformed and modernized, we have embarked on a process to revisit the functioning premises of the organs of the United Nations. We have done so successfully with the Economic and Social Council, and in fact we continue to do so. Likewise, we continue to collectively undertake measures to strengthen the General Assembly. Why then can we not do the same for the Security Council?

The reform of the Security Council constitutes one of the important components of the efforts to strengthen, revitalize and democratize the United Nations. Therefore, the political courage we demonstrated to strengthen the General Assembly and to review and revitalize the work of the Economic and

Social Council and its related fields should open the way to the successful conclusion of the equally important work on the reform of the Security Council.

My delegation has taken note of the recommendation of the report of the Open-ended Working Group, as contained in document A/55/47. Likewise, my delegation expresses its thanks to Mr. Harry Holkeri, President of the fifty-fifth session of the General Assembly and the Vice-Chairmen of the Working Group, the Permanent Representatives of Iceland and Sri Lanka, for having steered the work of the Working Group.

In the Millennium Declaration, the world leaders resolved to intensify efforts to achieve a comprehensive reform and democratization of the Security Council in all its aspects. In this context, the clustering of issues is aimed at facilitating the work of the Working Group. It does not encompass value judgement, as correctly implied in the decision of the Working Group that cluster I and cluster II issues be considered on equal terms. Namibia shares that view.

We must realize that the indefinite postponement of the enlargement and the democratization of the Security Council will amount to the gradual erosion and relegation of the General Assembly and other organs of the United Nations. This will be detrimental to the effective functioning of the United Nations and certainly is not in the interest of the majority of its Members.

During the consideration of the report of the Security Council, I emphasized, among others things, the gap between the adoption of Security Council resolutions and their implementation and enforcement. This is one of the issues that Member States must address.

As an example, most of the questions before the Security Council are on Africa. The majority of resolutions adopted to date by the Security Council are also on Africa. Yet, when totalling the number of resolutions that have been fully implemented and enforced, Africa will be at the bottom of the list. Granted, there could be several reasons for this unwarranted state of affairs. However, Namibia, having had that rare privilege of serving on the Security Council, can safely state that the major reason is the unbalanced, undemocratic and non-representative structural set-up of the Security Council. Therefore, it is crucial for us that the Security Council be reformed and democratized.

Hence we stand by the decision of the Organization of African Unity (OAU) that Africa deserves two permanent and five non-permanent seats on the Security Council. Africa's decision that the two permanent seats for Africa will be on a rotational basis again demonstrates the collective, representative and democratic spirit in which Africa is pursuing this issue.

Our position on the veto is well known. However, let me reiterate that the veto power as a voting instrument has not served us well. Nevertheless, it is Namibia's view that an expanded Security Council should have permanent members with equal privileges and obligations. International peace and security cannot be left to the goodwill of some.

Hence, the Council must be democratized in order to ensure its accountability to the entire membership of the United Nations, on whose behalf it carries out the primary function of maintaining international peace and security.

Mr. Manalo (Philippines): As a founding member of the United Nations, the Philippines has a profound interest in the reform of the Security Council. We are therefore fully committed to finding a mutually acceptable compromise on the outstanding issues before the Open-ended Working Group on the reform of the Security Council, particularly on the expansion of the number of permanent and non-permanent members of the Council. We remain equally committed to advancing the progress already achieved on specific measures to reform the procedures and decision-making process of the Council, with a view to making them more transparent and open to the participation of non-members.

The Philippines also continues to believe that any final decision on the reform of the Security Council should be in the form of a package agreement consisting of an expanded Security Council membership in both categories and a comprehensive and coherent set of recommended measures to be appropriately institutionalized by the Council so as to reform the procedures of the Council in order to provide transparency and greater participation of Member States in its decision-making process. Another possible element in this package would be the limitation of the application of the veto to issues related to the maintenance of international peace and

security. It goes without saying that the general support of the United Nations membership for any final package is necessary.

To help achieve this needed compromise we may also have to examine the Working Group's methods of work and improve upon them where necessary. The Philippines would support efforts in this regard, bearing in mind that the Working Group, aside from the plenary itself, remains the General Assembly's sole deliberative body on the reform of the Security Council. In this regard, under the chairmanship of the former President of the General Assembly, Harry Holkeri, and the two Vice-Chairmen, Ambassadors Ingolfsson and de Saram, innovations such as the interactive debate with members of the Security Council and meetings with the Secretariat officials directly assisting the Council have, in our view, generated fresh perspectives into the Working Group's deliberations, and have created a greater appreciation of the issues being considered by the Working Group. These exchanges should continue at the Working Group's future sessions. The interactive exchange could also be broadened to consider issues aside from the working methods and procedures of the Council.

The establishment of the Working Group eight years ago brought a sense of expectation and hope that the United Nations would be able to provide the global community with a more representative and transparent Security Council. Despite the number of years spent in negotiating the reform, the Philippines remains confident that a package agreement can still be achieved within a reasonable time. But it is necessary to set the stage for serious negotiations involving trade-offs. We therefore believe the Open-ended Working Group should, at the outset of its next session, identify those elements or issues where general agreement already exists or can be achieved in the near term, and then focus its attention on those issues where further work is clearly needed.

In practical terms, this means reaffirming, as appropriate, those issues where general preliminary agreement already exists, subject, of course, to an overall package agreement. In this regard, we have in mind a number of cluster II issues. The Working Group should therefore focus its deliberations at its next session on matters such as the size and composition of an expanded Council, the extension of and the limitation of the use of the veto and certain outstanding cluster II issues, such as measures to ensure greater participation of troop-contributing countries in peacekeeping operation decision-making, measures to create greater transparency of the informal consultations of the whole and improving the annual report of the Security Council to the General Assembly. This approach would, in our view, more precisely highlight those specific issues that need to be resolved in order to complete an acceptable package agreement as well as enable the membership to devote more time to considering them. This approach should also entail agreement to drop from the Working Group's consideration certain proposals that clearly have elicited scant or no support over the years. In our view, the Working Group would only squander its valuable time in revisiting these proposals. In other words, the key issues should still be on the table, but not every single proposal made over the past eight years.

Hopefully, this approach will enable the Working Group to begin serious consideration of negotiating texts or language on the outstanding issues.

Mr. Seixas da Costa (Portugal): The reform of the Security Council is once again on the agenda of the General Assembly, for the twenty-second consecutive year. We have before us, as a framework for the debate, the report of the Open-ended Working Group. This report, with its annexes, reflects almost a decade of intense discussion on the reform of the Security Council. However, the results are meagre.

The reform of the Security Council is surely a complex issue. The objective, nevertheless, remains clear: to review the membership of the Security Council in view of the substantial increase in the membership of the United Nations, as well as the changes in international relations. This is the mandate of the Open-ended Working Group, as set out by the General Assembly in 1993. At that time, we were in the early stages of a new era of international relations, triggered by the end of the cold war. Also, at that time the United Nations membership, since the last reform of the Security Council, had increased by almost 40 per cent. Nevertheless, today, almost a decade later, these significant changes have yet to be reflected in the composition of the Council.

I must recognize, however, that important efforts have been undertaken to move the process forward. The mobilization of this Assembly in 1998 was one such effort, and it resulted in the unanimous adoption of resolution 53/30. That resolution was crucial in

clarifying the two-thirds majority rule necessary for decisions pertaining to the reform.

On the other side, the commitment of your predecessor, Mr. President, President Holkeri, and the other members of the Bureau, were of the utmost importance in helping to distil the main elements under discussion on both clusters. My delegation commends particularly their efforts in preparing the set of useful documents that are now attached to the report. These will enable us to better focus our discussions in the future.

At a higher political level, the process of the reform of the Security Council was given a particular boost during the Millennium Summit. At that time, our Heads of State and Government gathered to adopt the Millennium Declaration and expressed the commitment to intensify their efforts to achieve a comprehensive reform of the Council in all its aspects. The main elements for reform are now on the table. With the political will thus expressed, our delegations should now be able to build an appropriate solution.

The Security Council has been confronted in the last decade with an increasing number of situations and conflicts in different parts of the world. The latest terrorist attacks constitute an unprecedented challenge to the international community, calling for concerted action in which the Security Council plays a central role. To better deal with such complex situations, the Security Council, as the body primarily responsible for the maintenance of peace and security, has to be regarded as a legitimate body, acting on behalf of the whole international community and with full transparency. Enhancing its representative nature and improving its methods of work are therefore the crucial elements for reinforcing Council authority and the effectiveness of its decisions. Today, more than ever, we must conclude the process of the reform of the Security Council, as we need to have a strong body that is really representative of the international community.

In his statement to the fifty-fifth session of the General Assembly, Mr. Holkeri alluded precisely to this. Encouraged by the clear support received from Ministers for Foreign Affairs for the continuation of efforts on Security Council reform, he highlighted the need to consider all the avenues that would advance the process and put forward suggestions to that effect. Portugal supports this thrust and is open to suggestions that may be useful for moving forward the process of the reform of the Security Council.

It could be helpful, for example, to take this subject to a higher political level of debate if we continue to experience serious difficulties in advancing the negotiations in the Working Group. This, in our view, could help to streamline the discussions and to regain the political momentum created by the Millennium Declaration.

For our part, we remain ready to engage actively in the next steps of the negotiations. However, we must bear in mind the need to address the question of reform in all its aspects. We should remind ourselves of the need to tackle this question as a package and to achieve what was asked of us — a comprehensive reform of the Council in all its aspects, not a reform in only certain aspects of its work.

This is a special time at which we all must show flexibility in order to reach a solution that garners the general support of the membership. We must do so in the interest of the international community. This should apply to all issues, from the question of numbers to the question of the veto.

Indeed, to achieve a comprehensive solution, the question of the veto must be addressed in the light of the overwhelming support of the general membership for reform in this regard. The fact is that, while used formally very moderately in recent times, the veto, or the threat of its use, continues to be present in every aspect of the Council's decision-making process.

Portugal, together with other countries, submitted a number of very concrete proposals to the Working Group with regard to the restriction of the use of the veto. These proposals remain valid, realistic and worthy of consideration. We hope we will be able to find the necessary flexibility in our consideration of this matter, as we are receiving new positive signals from among the permanent members, indicating some degree of openness to considering restrictions on the use of this power.

With your commitment, Mr. President, we are confident that it will be possible to keep the subject of Security Council reform a high priority on the international agenda and to allow the United Nations general membership to move the process to the next step.

The United Nations urgently needs to adapt to the realities of the new century. Its role as a vital instrument for the political regulation of the globalization process and as an indispensable tool for organizing common efforts to face new challenges requires a set of new and constructive ideas to revitalize the Organization. We very much count on the Assembly's contribution to that aim.

Mr. Rodríguez Parrilla (Cuba) (*spoke in Spanish*): In recent years, this has been one of the agenda items on which the greatest number of delegations have participated. During the fifty-fifth session, we heard over 110 statements and the number is very high again this year. That is evidence of the priority importance attached to this item. The reasons for that are obvious. Security Council reform is undoubtedly the most delicate task in the reform of the United Nations as a whole, and its outcome will have the greatest impact on the future of this Organization.

We need a Security Council that is truly able to fulfil the important responsibilities assigned to it by the Charter. The power to decide on the application of coercive measures against States, including sanctions or even military action, requires impartiality, representativeness and legitimacy. The Security Council is not and will not be able to be effective with its current composition and working methods. It requires profound and urgent reform because it is neither democratic, nor equitable nor representative. It neither reflects the realities of the contemporary world nor represents the interests of the membership of the United Nations.

Let us be clear about this: the Security Council of today is efficient only in safeguarding the interests of the permanent members. The situation is even more disturbing when that same unrepresentative Council assumes increasingly broad functions and invades purviews that actually fall to other organs, mainly the Economic and Social Council and the General Assembly.

The number of States Members of the United Nations has grown almost fourfold since 1945. Nonetheless, it has been almost 35 years since the number of members of the Council increased from 11 to the present 15, in spite of the fact that, since that last expansion, 76 new Members have joined the United Nations. At the present time, the membership of the Council constitutes barely 8 per cent of the total membership of the Organization.

A Security Council with fewer than 26 members will not be able to redress the current imbalances. That is why a minimum of 11 new seats should be created. Although this figure would remain lower than that of similar organs in other international organizations, it would raise the membership of the Council to some 13 per cent of the total membership of the United Nations.

The Security Council must be expanded to include new permanent and non-permanent members. An increase in the number of non-permanent members alone would only heighten the current imbalance. As the Non-Aligned Movement has affirmed, if no agreement is achieved on other categories, for the time being only the number of non-permanent members should be increased.

Cuba is not in favour of the creation of other categories of membership in the Security Council. The new permanent and non-permanent seats to be created in the Council through reform must enjoy exactly the same prerogatives as the current ones, without the establishment of discriminatory criteria. In any broadening of the category of permanent membership, a minimum of two African, two Latin American and Caribbean and two developing Asian countries should be included. The fundamental objective of the expansion of that organ should be to correct the under-representation of the developing countries.

I should like to dwell on that point for a moment, because we sometimes have the impression that its importance is not grasped equally by all. How can the Security Council be expected to have a correct understanding of the profound underlying causes of conflicts, and therefore effectively deal with those conflicts, when two thirds of the world's population, living in the developing countries, are severely under-represented in the Council? How is it possible for the Council to fulfil its responsibility in the maintenance of international peace and security if it does not adequately represent those 4.5 billion persons who live in the third world, a billion of whom are hungry, three fifths of whom have no sanitation services, one third of whom have no drinking water, one quarter of whom have no housing and one fifth of whom have no basic health services? How do we explain the fact that Africa, whose conflicts occupy most of the items on the Council's agenda, does not have a single

representative among the permanent members of that organ?

The need for greater transparency in the work of the Council is urgent. In a world that is increasingly interdependent, the decisions taken by that organ have growing implications, direct and indirect, for all Member States. Not only is it necessary to increase the number of open meetings; those must also offer genuine opportunities to non-members of the Council to make useful contributions.

We have seen with increasing frequency the convening of open debates in the Council that, in the long run, have no impact on the resolutions and presidential statements that are adopted because the texts have been agreed in advance behind closed doors by its members.

The Council's rules of procedure urgently need to be amended and formally adopted. Fifty-five years after their establishment and 19 after their last amendment, the rules of procedure should no longer be provisional. The measures already adopted by the Council or applied in practice should be institutionalized and consolidated, instead of being ever dependent on the changing views of the month's President of that organ. This year, some progress has been made in the Open-ended Working Group in connection with so-called cluster II items. Let us hope that this will contribute to progress on remaining issues.

As for cluster I, in expressing frustration at the lack of progress on certain items, some delegations have said that nothing can be done while the permanent members continue to refuse to consider the least limitation in the use of the veto. Cuba does not share that approach. The Charter does not give permanent members absolute powers. On the contrary, Article 24 explicitly states that the Security Council acts on behalf of all Member States and that, in discharging its duties, the Security Council shall act in accordance with the purposes and principles of the United Nations. If these requirements are not met, the General Assembly has the right and the duty to act. It is therefore imperative that the General Assembly be revitalized and that it assume all its Charter powers as the sole organ of the United Nations in which all Member States participate, in which there is no place for hegemonism and in which the obsolete privilege of the veto does not exist.

The subject of the veto has a central place in the reform of the Council. Currently, the mere opposition of a permanent member can prevent the will of the other 188 Member States from being carried out. The veto is exercised or threatened only when there is disagreement with the majority, which is anti-democratic in its very essence. No one can seriously allege that, in the roughly 290 times that the veto has been formally used, it has been so in the interests of the international community, in accordance with Article 24 of the Charter.

Furthermore, the problem resides not only in formal and public uses of the veto, but also in the so-called silent vetoes, which are frequently exercised in the so-called informal consultations, where it is often enough for a permanent member to express disagreement in order for a course of action favoured by the majority to be altered. Until the final objective of eliminating the veto is achieved, it is necessary as a first step to amend the United Nations Charter to limit the veto to those actions that are taken under Chapter VII of the Charter.

Every new international crisis reminds us of the weaknesses of the Council and its practices. Many delegations have expressed their concern at the letter recently sent to the Security Council by one of its permanent members following the initiation of military action in Afghanistan, in which it was brazenly indicated that other countries might be attacked by that permanent member as a result of the events of 11 September.

There was no reply to the letter. How protected can we feel with a Security Council that does not react, even timidly, in the face of such threats, which are entirely contrary to the purposes and principles of the Charter? We cannot expect any real leadership from a body in which some of the permanent members practise double standards and selective policies, giving priority to narrow national interests instead of global interests.

The same Council that acted immediately as a result of the events of 11 September was not prepared even to consider many other terrorist acts that occurred in the past, such as the criminal sabotage in full flight of the Cubana de Aviación aircraft near Barbados, which cost the lives of 73 passengers and crew members.

It is the same Council that is completely paralysed in the face of the critical situation in the occupied Palestinian territories, as a result of which hundreds of innocent civilians have already died, owing to the objection by a single permanent member to taking measures.

It is the same Council that discusses and approves documents on small arms and light weapons, but does absolutely nothing about nuclear weapons. How can we be expected to view as legitimate norms of conduct dictated by the Security Council, when some of its members are responsible for the fact that there are more than 30,000 nuclear weapons in the world, directly threatening the international peace and security that the Council is supposed to defend?

While reaffirming our firm condemnation of the terrorist acts of 11 September, we hope that the speed and magnitude of the response to those events will extend to the other grave problems affecting us. That same day, just as many other regrettable events occur in the world every 24 hours, all year long, more than 33,000 children under the age of five died from diseases that are absolutely preventable, and almost 70,000 more destitute people joined the hungry masses in the world. There were no minutes of silence for them, no emergency meetings of the Security Council. No committee was established in record time to begin to take urgent measures to deal with those situations.

We hope that during this session we will be able honour the mandate approved by our heads of State and Government during the Millennium Summit, by intensifying work to achieve a truly comprehensive reform of the Security Council in all its aspects.

I conclude by expressing thanks to Mr. Harri Holkeri and to Ambassadors John de Saram and Thorsteinn Ingólfsson for the excellent way in which they led the Working Group during the fifty-fifth session, and by wishing every success to the new Bureau elected to guide the Group's work.

Programme of work

The President: I should like to inform members that the second item originally scheduled for this afternoon — agenda item 26, "Follow-up to the outcome of the special session on children" — for the purpose of considering draft resolution A/56/L.7, will be taken up at a later date to allow time for the Advisory Committee on Administrative and Budgetary Questions and the Fifth Committee to consider the programme budget implications pertaining to draft resolution A/56/L.7.

The General Assembly will be informed in due course of the date for which agenda item 26 will be rescheduled to consider draft resolution A/56/L.7.

The meeting rose at 6.10 p.m.